

Cronly stated that “all the gentlemen that you requested me to call on have signed the paper—Mr. Parsley, declined to sign at first, but afterwards did so—making a promise.”¹¹

Increasingly throughout the campaign, white men who were perceived as leaders of the Republican Party were targeted and vilified through speeches and newspaper articles. The recollections of James Cowan of the Wilmington *Evening Dispatch* reflect the criticism and hatred shown toward the men. Cowan claimed that the “lily white” leaders of the Republican party were “scum and trash, remnants of the carpet bag regime ... interested only in their own nefarious plans and objectives” and “used the negroes votes for their own purposes.”¹²

Following this train of thought—that white Republican leaders fully controlled black voters—Republican leaders received multiple letters and circulars that featured “crossbones” and notification that, “if there was any trouble with the negroes,”

¹¹ The pledge made by Russell was one in which Republican candidates were withdrawn from several races in favor of Democratic Party candidates prior to the election, and agreed to by Russell and his supporters for the sake of peace. Costin enclosed other papers with the undated note that were not found in the collection. The note indicates that signatures on any one of the circulars featuring the names of “prominent citizens” could have been coerced. Various accounts, some exaggerated, indicate that the coercion was both physical and verbal. James Worth to Josephine, November 4, 1898, James Spencer Worth Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A.J. Costin to Mr. Cronly, Cronly Family Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

¹² James H. Cowan, “The Wilmington Race Riot,” n.d., Louis T. Moore Collection, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington.

the leaders would be killed.¹³ As the campaign drew to a close, statewide Republican and Populist leaders such as Governor Russell and Senator Butler scheduled a rally in the city on October 29 but cancelled it after they were threatened by the Democrats who warned them that if they came to speak, there would be bloodshed. Republican Congressional candidate Oliver Dockery came to the city anyway but did not speak because of the hostile climate.¹⁴

¹³ George Rountree penned an explanation of his fears regarding white Republican control of black votes. He claimed that he observed on election day in 1894 the change in votes among black voters at a Brooklyn Precinct according to the whim of Daniel Russell. Rountree charged that black voters “exercised no choice” but changed their voting patterns in response to a call from Russell for the election of George French over Thomas Strange. Rountree claimed that a black voter was an “automaton” and that election was proof for him of “absolute control by the leaders of the negro vote.” Rountree, “Memorandum of my personal reasons for the passage of the suffrage amendment to the Constitution,” n.d., Henry G. Connor Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 311-312.

¹⁴ Rountree recalled that once Democrats discovered that Fusion leaders planned a rally in the city, Democrats feared that “if they [Fusionists] spoke and the negroes became inflamed, and had a brass band and a torch light procession, there certainly would be a riot.” A committee was appointed to “have an interview” with Russell, Butler and Prichard to “point out to them the extreme danger of a race riot that would follow an attempt on their part to speak.” Rountree opposed “harsh” language in the warning to the Fusionists but provided subtle approval of the committee led by T. M. Emerson and their ability to influence the Fusionists. Rountree, “Memorandum,” *Contested Election Case*, 360-362; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 639-640; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), October 25, 1898.